

Draft Meeting Notes
LCR MSCP Steering Committee April 23, 2014
Southern Nevada Water Authority

Attending

Perri Benemelis	Vikki Dee Bradshaw	Linda Carbone	Evelyn Erlandsen
Gregg Garnett	Steven Farinella	Jayne Harkins	Chris Harris
Sean Heath	Laura Henning	Sonja Kokos	Kurumi Kuroda
Bill Lamb	Terry Murphy	Judi Nielsen	Wade Noble
Steve Olson	Sara Price	Larry Purcell	Michelle Reilly
Dana Seding	Seth Shanahan	Laura Simonek	Ed Smith
Carrie Ronning	John Swett	Jason Thiriot	Ruth Valencia
Laura Vecerina	David Vigil	Fred Worthley	

Attending Via Conference Call

Grant Buma	Leslie Fitzpatrick	Vineetha Kartha	Tina Mozelewski
Doyle Wilson			

1. ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS

Introductions

The meeting convened at 10:00 a.m. by Chairperson Chris Harris. There were self-introductions of all attending.

Chair Harris opened the meeting.

Review of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed and approved.

Public Comments

No public comments were offered.

Approve November 18, 2013 Meeting Notes

The November 18, 2013_meeting notes were approved. (Moved by Perri Benemelis, seconded by Ruth Valencia, and approved by consensus.)

Election of Chair and Vice Chair

Chris Harris stated he was willing to serve an additional term as Chair and Perri Benemelis was willing to serve as Vice Chair of the Steering Committee. Chris Harris was elected as Chair and Perri

Benemelis was elected as Vice-Chair. (Moved by Fred Worthley, seconded by Vicki Dee Bradshaw, and approved by consensus.)

John Swett introduced Carrie Ronning as a new group manager for Wildlife Group and Gregg Garnett as a new group manager for Fisheries Group. He also announced that Judi Nielsen will be retiring and Kurumi Kuroda will be replacing her as a program support assistant. John also announced that Laura Sandor, also a support assistant, had taken another job.

2. MINOR MODS TO HCP

John Swett reviewed the provisions in the Implementing Agreement (Section 14.1) that allow for minor modifications to be made to existing conservation measures with a recommendation from the Program Manager and approval from the Steering Committee and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Western Yellow Bat: John Swett noted that during development of the LCR MSCP that the western yellow bat conservation measure was based on the current understanding of the bat's use of habitat along the LCR. Recent research and monitoring results suggest that the western yellow bat uses cottonwood-willow habitat primarily for foraging. He noted that the current WYBA3 conservation measure does not fully reflect the western yellow bat's use of cottonwood-willow habitats given that they roost primarily in the skirts of palm trees instead of cottonwood-willow as currently defined in the conservation measure. Including foraging to the conservation measure would match more closely to the species roosting and foraging ecology.

The Steering Committee approved Reclamation's recommended changes to the conservation measure WYBA3 to include foraging in cottonwood-willow and mesquite habitats (moved by Perri Benemelis, seconded by Larry Purcell, and approved by consensus).

Arizona Bell's Vireo: John Swett noted that when the LCR MSCP was finalized in 2005, Arizona Bell's vireos were thought to only use cottonwood-willow structural types III and IV. The conservation measure BEVI1 was based on this. Since then, systemwide and conservation area surveys have shown that Arizona Bell's vireos are more of a generalist species utilizing habitat in varying structure types during the breeding season for foraging and nesting. Adjusting the conservation measure to include cottonwood-willow I and II for Arizona Bell's vireo is based on data collected over 7 years and is recommended at this time to better reflect the species natural history.

The Steering Committee approved Reclamation's recommended changes to conservation measure BEVI1 to include cottonwood-willow habitats (moved by Perri Benemelis, seconded by Vicki Dee Bradshaw, and approved by consensus).

Colorado River Cotton Rat:

John Swett noted that when the LCR MSCP was finalized in 2005, the species distribution and habitat requirements for Colorado River cotton rat were based on the current understanding of their habitat use at that time. The research and controlled monitoring conducted systemwide and at conservation areas has recorded that the Colorado River cotton rat occupy a mosaic of cottonwood-willow and mesquite

land cover types with substantial vegetative ground cover and suggests that this species is not restricted to marsh habitat. The designation of marsh habitat by conservation measure CRCR2 only describes a portion of the type of habitat this species will utilize. Adding cottonwood-willow and mesquite habitat types to CRCR2 will better reflect the species ecology.

The Steering Committee approves Reclamation's recommended changes to conservation measure CRCR2 to include cotton-willow and mesquite habitats (moved by Perri Benemelis, seconded by Larry Purcell, and approved by consensus).

3. LCR MSCP UNDERFUNDING

John Swett provided an overview of LCR MSCP underfunding issue. He said that this spring, CAP sent a letter to the coordinating funding agencies noting that the inflation index for FY11 – FY14 had been miscalculated, based on a rebasing issue of the PPI Index, which resulted in the required program contributions being slightly below what they should have been for those years. He noted that this issue was discussed at the February Financial Work Group meeting and a decision was made to form a small group to develop a recommendation to the Steering Committee on how to resolve the issue. The small work group has agreed that the underfunding should be made up, but discussions are still on-going as to how to index the underfunding payments. John noted that Reclamation is in the process of having solicitor review language in the Funding and Management Agreement on the indexing issue. During the discussion Nevada indicated that they would like to pay their underfunding payment by the end of June. It was acknowledged that Nevada could do this even if a decision had not yet been made on the indexing issue and that once a decision was made, their payment amount could adjusted. Discussion then centered on the need to determine what the underfunding payments should be used for. A proposal to make-up any deficits in the Habitat Maintenance Fund and then place any additional funding towards the Remedial Measures Fund requirements was discussed. John suggested a conference call of the Steering Committee should be scheduled by the end of May to reach agreement on where the underfunding payments should be placed. Once Reclamation has gotten solicitor input and agreement has been reached on the indexing issue, a program decision document will be brought to the Steering Committee for approval. John then will send a letter to the Fish and Wildlife Service for their concurrence. CAP said that they have revised their process for calculating the inflation index to check for rebasing so that this won't happen again.

4. WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

FY13 Accomplishment: John provided an overview of FY13 accomplishments. He noted that the Steering Committee had approved work tasks totaling \$34,620,216. Actual LCR MSCP accomplishment in FY13 was \$32,198,080.09. Actual accomplishment was less than the minimum accomplishment due to a reduction in federal funding from sequestration. He noted that Reclamation incurred a funding debit of \$2,174,507.51. Total cumulative program accomplishment through FY13 is \$163,659,599.49. The group managers each presented highlights from their FY13 programs. Significant accomplishments included; establishment of 504 acres of land cover at 3 conservation areas (364 acres cottonwood-willow, 38 acres mesquite, 102 acres of marsh), stocking of 15,907 razorback suckers in Reach 2 and 12,303 in Reaches 3-5, and stocking of 6,318 Bonytail in Reaches 2-5.

Proposed FY15 Program: John Swett indicated that based on a preliminary inflation rate of 1.360 that minimum required program funding for FY15 was \$37,454,400 (\$18,727,200 federal and \$18,727,200 nonfederal). He noted that due to federal budget constraints it was anticipated that Reclamation will only receive \$16,151,000 and would be using existing federal credits to meet the federal cost-sharing requirements. Therefore, Reclamation is proposing an annual program of \$34,811,440. This consists of \$28,711,440 of work tasks and a \$6,100,000 contribution to the Land and Water Fund.

Draft FY15 Work Plan and Budget Review Schedule: John noted that the Work Group meeting to review the Draft FY2015 Work Plan and Budget is scheduled for May 7-8 in Phoenix. Written comments should be sent to Laura Vecerina by May 2nd. He noted that the final FY15 Work Plan and Budget would be posted for review by June 18th.

4. PROCESS UPDATES

Sonia Kokos presented work she is doing regarding the development of Conceptual Ecological Models for each of the covered species. These models identify factors important for each of the species life history stages, and identifies data gaps in knowledge and management questions that need to be addressed. Models have been developed for the razorback sucker, bonytail, and southwestern willow flycatcher. Models are being developed for 17 additional species and should be completed by the end of the year. These models are being developed to help the adaptive management process. Michelle Reilly and Steven Farinella then presented their work regarding data management. There is an ongoing effort to develop consistency in terms of site naming across all research, monitoring, and conservation development data collection activities. Work is continuing with the development of mobile electronic field forms to streamline data collection for all of the species. The design and building of the database to design and import data from the mobile field devices is continuing.

5. STEERING COMMITTEE SCHEDULE

Laura Vecerina confirmed that there would be a Work Group meeting in Phoenix May 7-8, 2014, a Steering Committee conference call on June 25, 2014, a work group meeting in September 2014, and a Steering Committee meeting on October 22, 2014.

6. GENERAL INFORMATION

Lesley Fitzpatrick presented information regarding a technical correction the FWS will be issuing regarding the listed range of the Yuma Clapper Rail.

7. SUMMARY AND ACTION ITEMS

The Steering Committee took action on four items. Chris Harris noted that an additional action item was the Steering Committee conference call planned for the end of May to further discuss the underfunding issue.

8. ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 1:35 p.m.